

SARL NEWS - SUNDAY 04 DECEMBER 2011

You are listening to ZS6SRL, the official radio station of the South African Radio League, the national body for amateur radio in South Africa, with a news bulletin every Sunday at 08:15 CAT in Afrikaans and at 08:30 CAT in English. To listen to a web stream, visit www.sarl.org.za, click on 'Amateur Radio Today' and follow the links for details. PLEASE NOTE: for audio via Echolink, connect to ZS0JPL-R.

You can download this bulletin and previous ones from www.sarl.org.za and also subscribe to receive future bulletins by e-mail.

Your newsreader this morning is (name), (call sign), on 145,725 and 7,066 MHz from Pretoria, with relays on 7,066 and 3,695 MHz SSB.

SILENT KEYS

News received late yesterday afternoon is that the key of Bert Howes, ZS6HS, stopped operating in the age of 96 years in 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria on 3 December. Unfortunately no more details are available at the time of uploading this bulletin. Our sincere condolences to his near and far relatives and friends.

It is with deep regret that the Boland Amateur Radio Club must announce that the key of Frans Byleveld, ZS1RF, became silent on 30th August 2011 in the age of 81 years. Frans was a founding member of The Boland branch of the SARL in 1948 and later an honorary member of the Club. Our sincere condolences go to his XYL Leonie, children, other relatives and friends.

(PAUSE)

In the news today:

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

RADIO AMATEURS LISTEN TO MARS SCIENCE LABORATORY SIGNAL
GET A 2012 ARRL HARDCOVER HANDBOOK OR ARRL ANTENNA
BOOK THIS CHRISTMAS

AO-51 GOES QRT

You are listening to ZS6SRL. Stay tuned for more details on these and other important and interesting items.

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Just in time for the Christmas season, Gary Pearce, KN4AQ, has created a video version of Clement Clark Moore's poem A Visit from St Nicholas – more commonly known as The Night Before Christmas – but Pearce's version has a decidedly Amateur Radio twist. With a guitar accompaniment by Don Mercz, WA3AYR, A Ham's Night Before Christmas features QST magazine covers, Gil cartoons and Christmas-themed QST advertisements from days gone by.

You can listen to it or download it from the Amateur Radio TODAY link on www.sarl.org.za.

RADIO AMATEURS LISTEN TO MARS SCIENCE LABORATORY SIGNAL

As NASA's Mars Science Laboratory was streaking away from Earth just seven hours after its November 26 launch, amateurs using the AMSAT-DL facility in Bochum, Germany eavesdropped on its 10 GHz telemetry signals. At 21:45 UTC, the spacecraft was about 115 000 km from Earth, heading for a rendezvous on the red planet in August 2012. James Miller, G3RUH, remotely reconfigured the Bochum tracking and receiving system, aiming the 20 metre parabolic dish antenna toward the Mars Science Laboratory. According to Miller, the signal had a spin-modulation of +3,5 Hz at two revolutions per minute. The dish at Bochum is also used by AMSAT-DL to automatically receive real-time solar data from the NASA STEREO A/B satellites. The data is transmitted to a NOAA server in the US via the Internet.

GET A 2012 ARRL HARDCOVER HANDBOOK OR ARRL ANTENNA BOOK THIS CHRISTMAS

The SA Amateur Radio Development Trust has both the hardcover versions of the ARRL 2012 Handbook and the new edition of the ARRL Antenna Book in stock. To order visit www.amateurradio.org.za/books.htm. Orders will be dispatched by parcel post starting 9 December. Order now to get the books delivered before Christmas. The SAARDT website also gives a description of the content of the two new books.

AO-51 GOES QRT

The AO-51 amateur radio satellite has gone QRT. AMSAT-North America Vice President of Operations, Drew Glasbrenner, KO4MA, says that the bird has ceased transmission and is not responding to any commands from the ground.

Glasbrenner's announcement came on Tuesday 29 November. In making public word of the demise of AO-51, KO4MA, noted that the last telemetry data received had indicated that the third of six batteries that power AO-51 was approaching a short circuit condition. Also that further observation indicated the voltage from three remaining cells was insufficient to power the UHF transmitters. Initial tests with the S-band transmitter were also not positive, although more attempts are expected.

Glasbrenner says that the control team tried leaving the satellite in a configuration where if voltages climb high enough, the 435,150 transmitter may possibly be heard. He says that the command team will regularly attempt communications with the satellite over the coming months noting that there is always the possibility that a cell will open from its short circuited state and make AO-51 useful once again.

The AO-51 amateur radio satellite was in orbit and served the world-wide amateur radio community for the better part of 7 years.

TAKE VHF ON HOLIDAY WITH YOU

Now that the holiday season is starting and many are planning to leave for the coast, it may be a good idea to take a low power VHF transceiver along including a small Yagi antenna for 144 MHz and enjoy the Tropo propagation. You will experience many strong Tropo openings during hot humid days and also about an hour after sunset at night when distances up to 400 km or even longer could be covered on SSB and FM.

If your transceiver is also equipped for 50 MHz, then take a small two or three element Yagi with you, as unexpected Sporadic-E openings in the December and January months can provide strong country-wide contacts during the mornings and/or afternoons even on low power.

Just imagine sitting around a braai fire at night with a beer in one hand and a microphone in the other making unusual contacts. Enjoy your holiday with VHF RF!

CLUB NEWS

At the AGM of the Southern African Antique Wireless Association held on the 12th November 2011, Richard, ZS6TF, was elected as President for 2012. The rest of the committee remains as is for the year ie, Rad, ZS6RAD, - Technical Advisor; John, ZS1WJ - Western Cape; Andy, ZS6ADY - PRO and Newsletter Editor.

The committee would like to thank Don, ZS5DR, outgoing President, for his contribution to the AWA over the past 2 years.

PROPAGATION REPORT

Hannes Coetzee, ZS6BZP, reports that the solar activity is declining further with only a few C-class flares produced during the week. Sunspot 1 363 appears to be growing and the potential for an isolated M-class flare remains. The sun's surface is still peppered with smaller sunspots promising exciting HF conditions.

For the people doing their own frequency predictions the expected effective sunspot number for the week will be around 88.

All the bands from 20 to 10 m will provide lots of DX fun with the higher bands typically opening first and the lower bands opening later during the day. 6 m is also waking up with some very nice TEP openings.

Please visit www.spaceweather.co.za for further information.

DIARY OF EVENTS

31 January 2012 - Last day for submission of nominations for Council members and also for submission of motions for the 2012 SARL AGM. 31 January 2012 - Closing date for submitting papers for SA AMSAT Space Symposium. Also: Submit nominations for SARL awards which will be presented at the gala dinner which will take place over the weekend of the 2012 SARL AGM.

SARL News invites clubs and individuals to submit news items of interest to radio amateurs and shortwave listeners. Submit news items - if possible - in both English and Afrikaans to www.sarl.org.za/newsinbox.asp, not later than the Thursday preceding the bulletin date.

The SARL also invites you to listen to Amateur Radio Today every Sunday morning at 10:00 CAT on 145,750 MHz in the Pretoria area, with relays on 7 082, 7 205 and 17 760 kHz. There is also a podcast by ZS6RO. For a web-stream and Echolink by ZS6FCS, visit www.sarl.org.za, click on 'Amateur Radio TODAY', go down the green column and click on 'LISTEN ON THE WEB'. A repeat transmission can be heard on Mondays at 16:30 UTC on 4 895 kHz. Sentech sponsors the ARMI transmissions on the non-amateur frequencies.

You have listened to a bulletin of the South African Radio League, compiled by George, Z6SNE.

Thank you for listening, 73. /EX

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